

LEON WILSON CLARK
OPERA SERIES

SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA

and the

SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

present

OUR TOWN

Houston Premiere

Music by NED ROREM

Libretto by J. D. McCLATCHY

Based on the play by Thornton Wilder

Richard Bado, conductor

Mary Duncan, stage director

Wortham Opera Theatre

March 17, 19, 21 and 23, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

Celebrating 1975-2010
35 Years

THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC RICE UNIVERSITY

Our Town

Music by Ned Rorem (born Oct. 23, 1923)

Libretto by J. D. McClatchy (born 1945)

Based on the play by Thornton Wilder

Premiere in 2006

Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, 1901

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

<i>Stage Manager</i>	<i>Tyson Miller</i>
<i>Dr. Gibbs, the town doctor</i>	<i>Christopher Besch</i>
<i>Mrs. Soames</i>	<i>Erin Johnson</i>
<i>George Gibbs, son of Dr. and Mrs. Gibbs</i>	<i>Brenton Ryan</i>
<i>Emily Webb, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Webb</i>	<i>Chelsea Morris</i>
<i>Joe Crowell, friend of George</i>	<i>Paul Wilt</i>
<i>Frank, friend of George</i>	<i>Geordie Alexander</i>
<i>Sam, friend of George</i>	<i>Joseph Eletto</i>
<i>Mrs. Webb</i>	<i>Elisabeth Rosenberg</i>
<i>Lady in the Audience</i>	<i>Abigail Dock</i>
<i>Mr. Webb, the newspaper editor</i>	<i>Shea Owens</i>
<i>Man in the Audience</i>	<i>Samuel Schultz</i>
<i>Simon Stimson, the choirmaster</i>	<i>Daniel Sherrill</i>
<i>Mrs. Gibbs</i>	<i>Carolyn Sproule</i>

CHORUS

<i>Geordie Alexander</i>	<i>Lauren Iezzi</i>	<i>Amy Owens</i>	<i>Julia Sterner-Holder</i>
<i>Abbey Curzon</i>	<i>Sara Lemesh</i>	<i>Stephen Ray</i>	<i>Manfredi Thimoté</i>
<i>Joseph Eletto</i>	<i>Robert Lilly</i>	<i>Erika Rodden</i>	<i>Paul Wilt</i>
<i>Maria Failla</i>	<i>Joseph Mishler</i>	<i>Erica Schoelkopf</i>	<i>Rachel Womble</i>

SUPERNUMERARIES

<i>Miles Dolney</i>	<i>Sophie Parker</i>
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SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Larry Rachleff, Music Director

Violin I	Viola	Flute	Trumpet
<i>Eric Siu,</i> <i>concertmaster</i>	<i>Kathleen Magill,</i> <i>principal</i>	<i>Maria Popova</i> <i>Henry Williford</i>	<i>Patrick Corvington</i>
<i>Mark Kagan</i>	<i>Timothy Rowland</i>	Oboe	Piano
<i>Hannah Dremann</i>	<i>Dawson White</i>	<i>Emily Snyder</i>	<i>Rachel Chao</i>
<i>Genevieve Micheletti</i>	<i>Lynsey Anderson</i>	Clarinet	Organ
<i>Sol Jin</i>	Cello	<i>Daniel Goldman</i> <i>Nicolas Chona</i>	<i>Rachel Chao</i> <i>Grant Loehnig</i>
<i>Brooke Bennett</i>	<i>Annamarie Reader,</i> <i>principal</i>	Bassoon	Assistant Conductor
Violin II	<i>Hellen Weberpal</i> <i>Matthew Kufchak</i>	<i>Maxwell Pipinich</i>	<i>Cristian Măcelaru</i>
<i>Andy Liang,</i> <i>principal</i>	Double Bass	Horn	Orchestra Manager and Librarian
<i>Alyssa Yank</i>	<i>Nicholas Browne,</i> <i>principal</i>	<i>Rebekah Daley</i> <i>John Turman</i>	<i>Kaaren Fleisher</i>
<i>Creston Herron</i>	<i>Daniel Smith</i>		
<i>Jacqueline Murchie</i>			

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ARTISTIC STAFF

Conductor	Richard Bado
Stage Director	Mary Duncan
Set Designer	Ryan McGettigan
Lighting Designer	David Gipson
Costume Supervisor	Barbara Dolney
Wig and Makeup Supervisor	Ginger Travis Page
Musical Preparation	Grant Loehnig, Rachel Chao
Properties Master	Alex Stutler
Surtitles	Carlton Ford, Karen Reeves

PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Director	Troy McLaughlin
Assistant Director/Stage Manager	Alex Stutler
Surtitle Operators	Evan Kardon, Samuel Schultz
Followspot Operators	Bridget Casey, Christina Curzon, Abigail Lindig
Running Crew	Arielle Carrara, Stephanie Jordan
Shepherd School Production Staff	Mandy Billings (Manager) Ryan Retartha, Francis Schmidt

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Houston Grand Opera

SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA DEPARTMENT AND VOICE DEPARTMENT

*Richard Bado, Professor of Opera Studies and
Director of the Opera Studies Program*
Stephen King, Professor of Voice and Chair of the Voice Department
Janet de Chambrier, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies
Debra Dickinson, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies for Acting and Movement
Susan Lorette Dunn, Lecturer in Voice
*Thomas Jaber, Professor of Music, Director of
Choral Activities, and Vocal Coach*
Kathleen Kaun, Professor of Voice
Grant Loehnig, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies
Susanne Mentzer, Professor of Voice
Rachel Chao, Staff Pianist
Karen Reeves, Opera Program Administrator
Troy McLaughlin, Technical Director
Alex Stutler, Assistant Director and Stage Manager
Barbara Dolney, Costume Supervisor

*The performance is approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes
with two intermissions.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

As the opera opens, a funeral procession is crossing the stage to the strains of the old hymn "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." From the midst of the mourners, the Stage Manager comes forward and introduces us to Grover's Corners, New Hampshire on May 7, 1901—a small, typical American town where some ordinary and extraordinary things are about to happen. We meet two families, first Doc Gibbs and his wife (the Doc is with a patient, Mrs. Soames), and then Editor Webb and his wife. Both couples are upstanding pillars of the community. The wives have identical gardens and two dissimilar children—George Gibbs, star of the high school baseball team, and Emily Webb, the best student in class. Though drawn to one another, their differences chafe. Emily, in a talk with her mother, wonders if boys will ever notice her. The Stage Manager continues to fill us in on Grover's Corners, and even answers questions from the audience. Choir practice has started, and Simon Stimson, the church organist, is drunk and unhappy again. Meanwhile, at their opposite bedroom windows, Emily and George figure out a problem—until Doc Gibbs calls George downstairs to reprimand him for ignoring his chores. Mrs. Gibbs returns from choir practice, and she and her husband stay out on the porch in the moonlit night, reminiscing, even as George and Emily, back at their windows, also stare at the moon, and at each other.

ACT II

Three years have gone by and Emily and George are about to get married. Doc and Mrs. Gibbs think back on their own marriage, while George impetuously dashes over to see his bride—to the consternation of a superstitious Mrs. Webb, who won't let him see Emily until they meet in the church, and insists Editor Webb give him some stern advice for the future. But the Stage Manager again interrupts the story, wanting to show how the young couple fell in love. So we're suddenly back two years in time, while George and Emily are having an important talk about their future lives, each frankly discussing feelings that upset the other. A turn into Mr. Morgan's drugstore for a soda seems the best way to prevent tears, and while sitting at the counter they both discover what is the most important thing in their lives. We now jump to July 7, 1904, three years into the future—the church on the day of the big wedding. But the bride and bridegroom sing separately of their fears . . . until their parents push them towards the altar. The service is read, the choir sings, the townfolk are clucking, and the happy couple race down the aisle and into married life.

ACT III

It is the summer of 1913. We are in the town cemetery. The dead are gathered on chairs to one side, and we can recognize some of them—Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Soames, Simon Stimson. They seem calmly detached. As the Stage Manager describes some of the changes that have occurred, we suddenly notice a funeral procession approaching. They are singing the same hymn heard at the beginning. Mrs. Gibbs explains that it is Emily who has died, giving birth to her second child. This is her funeral. The Stage Manager meditates on life and death, and on the fact that the dead "are waiting for something they feel is coming." As the coffin is lowered, Emily herself suddenly appears among the dead, and has already taken on some of their detachment. But she still misses George and their life, and wonders if she can return, just for a day, just to be part of life one last time. The dead warn her not to, that it will only add to her unhappiness. But Emily insists, and the Stage Manager agrees to accompany her back to the day of her thirteenth birthday.

Suddenly, she is back in Grover's Corners. Her father and mother—how young they look! she thinks—are pre-occupied with the small unimportant tasks and routines of the day. George enters, and gifts are given to the birthday girl, but no one seems to realize the importance of each moment, or how fleeting are joy and life. In tears, Emily begs the Stage Manager to take her back to the dead. As she leaves with him, she sings one last farewell to Grover's Corners, lamenting "Oh, earth, you are too magical for anyone to know your miracle." The dead welcome her back, and together they sing of the living, "they don't understand, do they?" The Stage Manager comes forward again. The stars are criss-crossing the sky, the world is asleep. In an indifferent universe the world keeps on. "Only this place still straining away, straining away all the time, straining away to do its best."

BIOGRAPHIES

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, RICHARD BADO (Conductor) made his professional conducting debut in 1989 leading Houston Grand Opera's acclaimed production of *Show Boat* at the newly restored Cairo Opera House in Egypt. Since then, Mr. Bado has conducted at Teatro alla Scala, Opéra National de Paris, Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, the Tulsa Opera, the Russian National Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, Wolf Trap Opera, Houston Ballet, and has conducted the Robert Wilson production of Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* at the Edinburgh Festival. He has appeared regularly in recital with Renée Fleming and has also accompanied Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade, Denyce Graves, Susan Graham, Marcello Giordani, Ramón Vargas, Samuel Ramey and Nathan Gunn. Mr. Bado, who holds music degrees from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the 2000 Alumni Achievement Award, and West Virginia University, has studied advanced choral conducting with Robert Shaw. Mr. Bado has served as Houston Grand Opera's Chorus Master since 1988. This season marks Mr. Bado's sixth year as Director of the Opera Studies Program at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He has been on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School, the International Vocal School in Moscow, and has served on the music staff of the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Australia, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Chautauqua Opera and Wolf Trap Opera. Mr. Bado regularly judges for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and served as Houston Grand Opera's Head of Music Staff for 14 seasons.

BARBARA DOLNEY (Costume Supervisor) was the Wardrobe Assistant for Houston Ballet for over ten years. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre from Southwest Texas State University in 1990, and her Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre with an emphasis in Costume Design from the University of Houston in 1994. She has designed costumes for such theaters as the University of Houston, Stages, College of the Mainland, and the University of Houston - Clear Lake. Some of the shows she has designed include *A View From the Bridge*, *The Lion In Winter*, *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Cœur*, and *Crimes Of The Heart*. She has taught the Costume Design class for the Ben Stevenson Academy Summer Program for the last several years. Most recently she coordinated the costumes for the Shepherd School's productions of *Don Giovanni*, *Viva la mamma!*, *The Prologue from Ariadne auf Naxos*, *A Little Night Music* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

MARY DUNCAN, (Stage Director) a native of Texas, studied at the American Repertory Theatre at Harvard University, and at the Juilliard School where she also served on faculty. Her directing credits include three seasons with the National Symphony Orchestra's Mozart Festival at the Kennedy Center where she directed *Der Schauspieldirektor*, *Bastien und Bastienne*, and *La Clemenza di Tito*. She directed the American premieres of Bizet's *La Jolie Fille de Perth* and Nielsen's *Maskarade* (in Danish) with Sarasota Opera. For Berkshire Opera, where she was Associate Artistic Director for ten years, she directed fifteen productions including the acclaimed world premiere of *Summer* by Stephen Paulus, *The Rake's Progress*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Susannah*, *La Cenerentola* and Menotti's *The Consul* which was recorded by Newport Classics. At the BAM Majestic Theater, she directed Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, with designs by legendary multi-disciplinary designer Massimo Vignelli, and in the Opera House, Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Britten's *Noye's Fludde*. Her production of *The Magic Flute* with designs by celebrated children's book illustrator Eric Carle was aired by PBS (WGBH Boston). She has enjoyed an association on faculty with The Aspen Music Festival where her productions include *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Renard*, and *The Rape of Lucretia*. Ms. Duncan is the newly appointed director of the young artist program for PORTopera, Portland, Maine.

DAVID GIPSON (Lighting Designer) has been designing professionally for over twenty-five years. He was a company member with Teatro Vista Theatre Company in Chicago, Illinois and a Resident Artist at Unity Theatre in Brenham, Texas. His credits include: Off Broadway - *Runt of the Litter* at 37 Arts and MCC Theater in New York City; *The Late Henry Moss* and *Thief River* at the Contemporary American Theatre Festival; over one hundred productions in Chicago including *Straight as a Line* and *The State I'm In* for The Goodman Studio, *God of Isaac*, *Drowning Sorrows* and *Murder in Green Meadows* for Victory Gardens Theatre, *Company*, *The Lynching of Leo Frank* (both of which were nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Citation) *Dead of Night - The Execution of Fred Hampton* and *The State of Mississippi vs. Emmett Till* for Pegasus Players, *Don Quixote*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *MacBeth*, and *Twelfth Night* for Oak Park Festival, *Santos and Santos*, *Broken Eggs*, *Aurora's Motive* and *Journey of the Sparrows* for Teatro Vista, and *Our Town* for Steppenwolf's Arts Exchange. Mr. Gipson's Houston credits include *Orange Flower Water*, *The Spitfire Grill*, *Always...Patsy Cline*, *Recent Tragic Events*, *Speaking in Tongues*, *Communicating Doors*, *Old Wicked Songs*, *Turn of the Screw*, *Anton in Show Business*, and *Kindertransport* at Stages Repertory. Mr. Gipson is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829.

RYAN MCGETTIGAN (Set Designer) has designed the sets for the Shepherd School opera productions of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *A Little Night Music*, *Viva la mamma!*, and the Prologue from *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Additional recent opera credits include *La Traviata* with Granite State Opera, *Die Fledermaus* with Opera Providence, *Der Rosenkavalier* with Lowell House Opera, *Summer and Smoke* with New England Conservatory, and an Assistant Design residency at Glimmerglass Opera. Theatre credits include Cape Cod Repertory, New Hampshire's Barnstormers Theatre, Boston's Centastage, Nora Theatre, New Repertory Theatre companies, and Atlanta's Legacy Theatre. In television, Mr. McGettigan designed The 26th Annual EVVY Awards. His upcoming productions include *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* for Atlanta's Legacy Theatre, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* for Cape Cod Repertory Theatre and *Carmen* for Eugene Opera.

— BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED ON INSERTED PAGE —



RICE

BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED:

GINGER TRAVIS PAGE (Wig and Makeup Supervisor) was a costume, wig and makeup designer at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, in Houston, for over 16 years. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Costume Design at the University of Memphis. Ms. Page has designed for theatre, dance, film, museum exhibits, and commercial trade shows in Memphis, San Francisco, New York and in Houston since 1985. She designed many shows at Stages including *Sand Between Your Toes*, *Learned Ladies* and the world premiere of Jack Heifner's *Running on Empty*. She has also designed for other local theatres, dance companies and assisted with many school productions. Ms. Page is currently a textile arts and jewelry designer.

CAST

GEORDIE ALEXANDER (Frank) is a third year master's student at Rice University, studying with Dr. Stephen King. A native of Rochester, New York, he graduated from SUNY Fredonia with a bachelor's degree in music education. For two summers he participated in the Aspen Music Festival and School. Recent roles of note include Valletto in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Maximillian in *Candide*, Pinellino in *Gianni Schicchi*, and the Impresario in *Viva la mamma!* Mr. Alexander has also performed Sid in *Albert Herring*, Nerone in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and Ping in *Turandot* in scenes programs while at the Shepherd School.

Bass-baritone CHRISTOPHER BESCH's (Dr. Gibbs) performances have been described as "vital and daring." His appearance as Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Aspen Opera Theater Center this past summer was met with great enthusiasm. Mr. Besch's past operatic repertoire includes Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* with The Opera Theatre of Weston, Seneca in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Falstaff in Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In the summer of 2008 he participated in the Chautauqua Music Festival, where he premiered the song "Requiem" by New York composer Ben Moore. A frequent performer of concert music, he has appeared in Handel's *Messiah* with the Lawrence University Symphony Orchestra and Concert Choir and as Jesus in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with James Rightmyer and the Choral Arts Society of Louisville. Other concert performances include Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* and Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*. Mr. Besch is in his second year at the Shepherd School of Music pursuing his master's degree in vocal performance with Dr. Stephen King.

Mezzo-soprano ABIGAIL DOCK (Lady in the Audience) is a second year undergraduate student from Medford, Oregon. *Our Town* marks her first operatic role at the Shepherd School, although she has worked backstage for the opera productions *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *A Little Night Music*. Last spring, she was a soloist in the Rice Chorale presentation of Brahms' *Liebesslieder Walzer*. This summer she will participate in Songfest with Pepperdine University. Ms. Dock is a student of Kathleen Kaun.

Baritone JOSEPH ELETTO (Sam) is a second year undergraduate student from Long Island, NY. He has appeared in the choruses of *Viva la Mamma!*, and *A Little Night Music* at Rice University, and as Buonafede in Haydn's *Il Mondo della Luna* last summer at La Music Lirica in Novafeltria, Italy. He recently was the 2nd prize winner in the 2011 Hal Leonard Vocal Competition.

This summer, Mr. Eletto will participate in the Caramoor Bel Canto Festival as an apprentice, singing in the choruses of **H.M.S. Pinafore** and **Guillaume Tell**. Last spring, he was a soloist in the Rice Chorale presentation of Brahms's **Liebeslieder Walzer**. Mr. Eletto is a student of Dr. Stephen King.

ERIN JOHNSON (Mrs. Soames) is a first year graduate student at the Shepherd School of Music and a native of New Jersey. She received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Philadelphia Biblical University and also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies. This past fall she performed the role of Virtue in the Shepherd School's production of **L'incoronazione di Poppea**. In 2008, she performed the role of Dorabella in Mozart's **Così fan tutte** and the role of Katisha in Gilbert and Sullivan's **The Mikado** at Opera in the Ozarks. She was in the Santa Fe Opera Singer Apprentice Program and performed in the choruses of **La Traviata**, **Don Giovanni**, **Alceste**, and **L'elisir d'amore** during the summer of 2009. She recently sang Dalila in **Samson et Dalila** in the Shepherd School's winter opera scenes program. Ms. Johnson is a student of Kathleen Kaun.

TYSON MILLER (Stage Manager) is a first year graduate student at Rice University, studying with Dr. Stephen King. Mr. Miller received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Baylor University. Mr. Miller's operatic roles include Arnalta in **L'incoronazione di Poppea**, Mayor Upfold in **Albert Herring**, the Witch in **Hansel and Gretel**, Fenton in **Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor**, and Elder Hayes in **Susannah**. A native of Belton, Texas, Mr. Miller was awarded Third Place and received the Encouragement Award at the 2009-2010 Southwest Region - Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. In March of 2010, Mr. Miller was awarded Third Place in the Collegiate Vocal Division of The Crescendo Music Awards, and was also named a semi-finalist in the 22nd Annual Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition. Mr. Miller participated in the CoOperative Opera Program, working with such coaches as Daniel Beckwith, Deborah Birnbaum, Kathleen Kelly, Nova Thomas and Ted Taylor. Additionally, Mr. Miller worked as a Studio Artist at Central City Opera where he performed in scenes and was instructed by John Moriarty, Catherine Malfitano, Ken Cazan and Gene Scheer.

Soprano CHELSEA MORRIS (Emily Webb) was last seen as Poppea in **L'incoronazione di Poppea** and Mrs. Nordstrom in **A Little Night Music** with The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. Ms. Morris made her professional debut in 2009 with DuPage Opera Theatre as Jenny Diver in Britten's **The Beggar's Opera**, quickly returning to the company as Giannetta in **L'elisir d'amore**. The Michigan native's other roles include First Lady in **Die Zauberflöte** with the Intermezzo Opera Festival in Brugge, Belgium, Anne Sexton in **Transformations**, Lauretta in **Gianni Schicchi**, the title role in Purcell's **The Fairy Queen**, and Barbarina in **The Marriage of Figaro**, all with DePaul University in Chicago, where she received her Bachelor of Music degree in 2008. On the concert stage, Ms. Morris has performed with the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra in a variety of solo repertoire. Her recent awards include First Place in the National Opera Association Vocal Competition Scholarship Division, finalist in the Bel Canto Foundation Competition, semi-finalist in Classical Singer's University Vocal Competition and the Vittorio Angeli Enrichment Scholarship for language and scene study in Urbania, Italy. Ms. Morris is a second year graduate student in the studio of Kathleen Kaun.

Baritone SHEA OWENS (Mr. Webb), from Scottsdale, Arizona, is a student of Dr. Stephen King pursuing a master's degree in vocal performance. He was a vocal fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center last summer, where he performed the Lackey in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and the Swineherd in *A Full Moon in March*. Mr. Owens graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree from Brigham Young University, where he played the four villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* as well as the title roles in *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. He spent two summers as a performing artist with Utah Festival Opera and performed in the chorus of *Carmen* with Utah Opera. At Rice University he sang the role of Liberto in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and in the scenes program sang Figaro from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He also performed the role of Papageno in *The Magic Flute* with Phoenix Opera. He has been accepted into the Wolf Trap Opera Studio for the coming summer.

ELISABETH ROSENBERG (Mrs. Webb) is a first year graduate student at Rice University, originally from Visalia, California. Ms. Rosenberg received her Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from University of California, Los Angeles in 2004. Her most recent awards include the 2009 Encouragement Prize in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition, Gulf Coast Region. Last fall she performed the role of Fortune in the Shepherd School production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Ms. Rosenberg is a student of Kathleen Kaun.

A Missouri native, tenor BRENTON RYAN (George Gibbs) is currently in his second year of graduate studies at the Rice University Shepherd School of Music, studying with Dr. Stephen King. This past February, Mr. Ryan made his debut with the Houston Symphony under Hans Graf in a concert performance of Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole*, singing the role of Torquemada alongside mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer. Other highlight performances from Rice include Nero in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, tenor soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Henrik in Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*, and the Tanzmeister in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Mr. Ryan received his Bachelor of Music degree from DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, where he performed the roles of Nanki-Poo in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, Captain Macheath in Britten's *The Beggar's Opera*, and the Prince in Conrad Susa's *Transformations*, among others. In the summer of 2008, Mr. Ryan was awarded the three-year "New Horizon Fellowship" for the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he has sung the role of Leon in Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, and where he will return this summer to sing Tony in Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

Baritone SAMUEL SCHULTZ (Man in the Audience) is making his Houston Symphony and Houston Grand Opera debuts this season. In February Mr. Schultz performed Ramiro in Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* and sang *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* with the Houston Symphony. With Houston Grand Opera, he will sing Ein Perückenmacher in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Mr. Schultz was recently seen as Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, George Jones in *Street Scene*, Littore in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Mr. Lindquist in *A Little Night Music*, the Maestro in *Viva la mamma!*, and he covered the roles of Masetto in *Don Giovanni* and PooBah in *The Mikado*. His solo concert repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah*, the Fauré *Requiem*, the Bach *Magnificat*, Saint-Saëns' *Christmas Oratorio*, Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, and Poulenc's *Rapsodie nègre*.

In 2008 Mr. Schultz represented Rice University in the Shepherd School of Music Regional Opera Gala Concerts in Aspen, Chicago, Dallas, New York City, and San Francisco. As an alumnus of the United States Senate Page Program, he had the prestigious honor of singing for Congress. Mr. Schultz is a student of Dr. Stephen King.

DANIEL J. SHERRILL (Simon Stimson), tenor, is a native Houstonian and a first year graduate student studying with Dr. Stephen King. Mr. Sherrill graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Music degree. While at Baylor, he sang the roles of Elder Gleaton in *Susannah*, Spärlich in *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, Erice in *L'Ormino*, and the title role in Britten's *Albert Herring*. Mr. Sherrill was a studio artist with Opera North in Lebanon, New Hampshire for the 2009 summer season performing in the ensembles of *Carmen* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. While at Opera North, he also performed in the scenes program in *L'Heure espagnole* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Last fall Mr. Sherrill sang the role of the First Soldier in the Shepherd School production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

A native of Montreal, Canada, mezzo-soprano CAROLYN SPROULE (Mrs. Gibbs) is a first year graduate student at Rice University, and is a student of Dr. Stephen King. Ms. Sproule received her Bachelor of Music degree from The Juilliard School in May of 2010. Last fall Ms. Sproule sang the role of Ottavia in the Shepherd School production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Recent performances include Jo in *Little Women* at The Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada, and Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Juilliard. She has been featured on National Public Radio's *From the Top*, and has sung recitals in New York, Boston, and Montreal. In scenes programs at The Juilliard School she has performed in *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Alcina* and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. This summer, she will attend The Aspen Music Festival where she will sing the role of Meg Page in *Falstaff*.

From Michigan, baritone PAUL WILT (Joe Crowell) is a third year undergraduate student. This past January he appeared in Rice University's scenes program as Billy Bigelow in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. With the Rice Chorale, Mr. Wilt has been a soloist in Brahms' *Liebeslieder Walzer*, Bach's *Magnificat* and premiered *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* by Peter Johns. He has also performed in many recent Shepherd School opera productions including *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *A Little Night Music*, *Don Giovanni* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Mr. Wilt is a student of Kathleen Kaun.